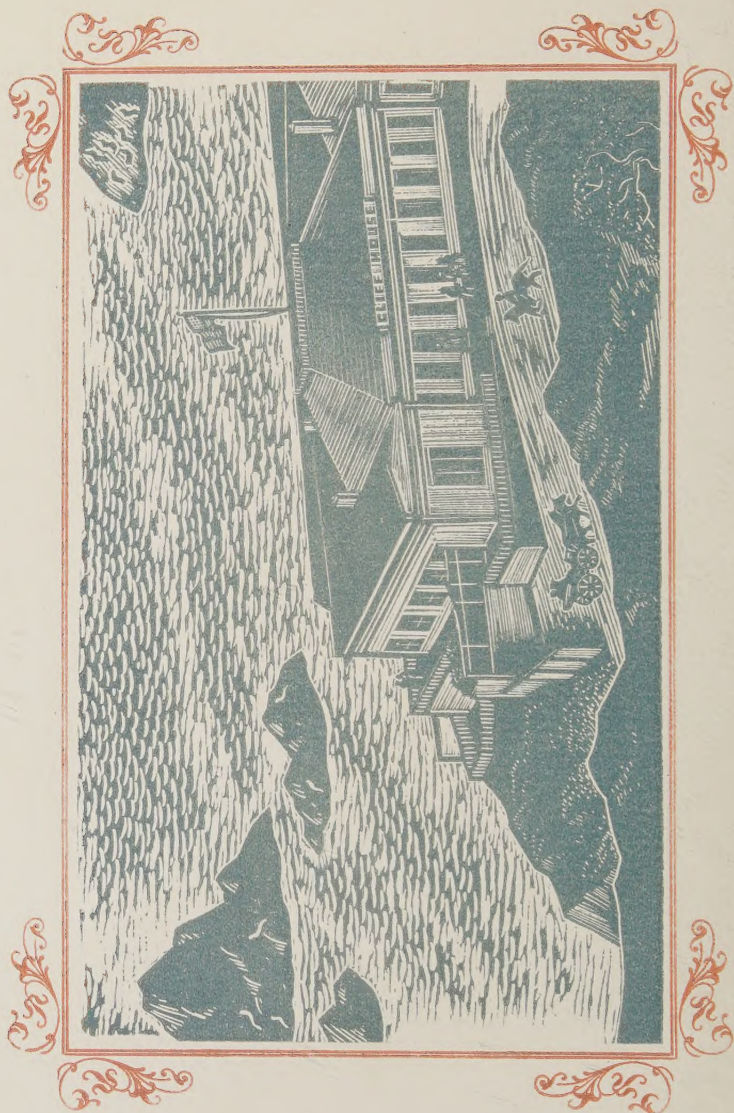


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A Letter from
**Anthony
Trollope**
describing

A Visit to California in

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Wood Engravings by
Mallette Dean

The Colt Press :: San Francisco
mcmxlv



ANTHONY TROLLOPE

declared that he made five trips to the United States. About the last trip his biographers are silent but the sketch of California which follows tells part of

the story. Trollope returned from his second visit to Australia in 1875 by way of San Francisco. Sadleir says in "Trollope: A Commentary" that the author sailed from Sydney for England on August 28, 1875. His arrival in San Francisco can be dated about September 25. The failure of the Bank of California to which he refers in the following letter, occurred on August 25.

A note to his publisher accompanies the letter, describing it as the last of twenty travel letters. The discovery of the series as published complete in the

Liverpool "Weekly Mercury" pieces the story together. Though the letters of a previous series in 1871-72 are signed only "Antipodean," (although unquestionably Trollope's), the letters in this series bear Trollope's signature. They appeared on page 5 in each issue of the "Weekly Mercury" from July 3, 1875, to November 13, 1875.

This letter has more than usual interest. As a rediscovered Trollope item it must concern that widening stream of readers who are reaffirming the old novelist's virtues. And as a picture of how San Francisco appeared sixty-five

years ago to a widely traveled English gentleman, it must amuse historically-minded Californians.

{The article is reprinted through the courtesy of the Huntington Library, owners of the original manuscript; and these prefatory notes are from those of Bradford A. Booth which appeared in the Huntington Library Quarterly in October, 1939, where this letter was first reprinted.}

THE
WOOD ENGRAVINGS



The Old Cliff House, San Francisco
frontispiece

The Ferry Building, San Francisco,
in 1875
page v

A Dwelling of the Period,
the residence of Louis A. Garnett
page 3

Bridalveil Fall, Yosemite
page 21

THE LETTER



*MY WAY HOME FROM
the Sandwich Islands to London took
me to San Francisco, across the Am-
erican continent, and New York,—
whence I am now writing to you my*

last letter of this series. I had made this journey before, but had on that occasion reached California too late to visit the now world-famous valley of the Yo Semite, and the big pine trees which we call Wellingtonias. On this occasion I made the excursion, and will presently tell the story of the trip,—but I must first say a few words as to the town of San Francisco.

I do not know that in all my travels I ever visited a city less interesting to the normal tourist, who, as a rule, does not care to investigate the ways of trade or to employ himself in ascertaining

how the people around him earn their bread. There is almost nothing to see in San Francisco that is worth seeing. There is a new park in which you may drive for six or seven miles on a well made road, and which, as a park for the use of a city, will, when completed, have many excellencies. There is also the biggest hotel in the world,— so the people of San Francisco say, which has cost a million sterling,— 5 millions of dollars,— and is intended to swallow up all the other hotels. It was just finished but not opened when I was there. There is an inferior menagerie of wild

beasts, and a place called the Cliff House to which strangers are taken to hear seals bark. Everything,—except hotel prices,—is dearer here than at any other large town I know; and the ordinary traveller has no peace left him either in public or private by touters who wish to persuade him to take this or the other railway route into the Eastern States. There is always a perfectly cloudless sky over head unless when rain is falling in torrents, and perhaps no where in the world is there a more sudden change from heat to cold in the same day. I think I may say that stran-

gers will generally desire to get out of San Francisco as quickly as they can,— unless indeed circumstances may have enabled them to enjoy the hospitality of the place. There is little or nothing to see, and life at the hotels is not comfortable. But the trade of the place and the way in which money is won and lost are alike marvellous. I found 10 / a day to be about the lowest rate of wages paid to a man for any kind of work in the city, and the average wages of a housemaid who is, of course, found in every thing but her clothes, to be over £ 70 per annum. All payments in California are

made in coin, whereas in the other states of the Union except California, Oregon, and Nevada, moneys are paid in depreciated notes,—so that the two dollars and a half per day which the labourer earns in San Francisco are as good as three and a quarter in New York. No doubt this high rate of pay is met by an equivalent in the high cost of many articles, such as clothing and rent; but it does not affect the price of food which to the labouring man is the one important item of expenditure. Consequently the labouring man in California has a position, which I have not known him to achieve elsewhere.

In trade there is a speculative rashness which ought to ensure ruin according to our old world ideas, but which seems to be rewarded by very general success. The stranger may of course remember if he pleases that the millionaire who builds a mighty palace is seen and heard of and encountered at all corners, while the bankrupt will probably sink unseen into obscurity. But in San Francisco there is not much of bankruptcy; and when it does occur no one seems to be so little impressed as the bankrupt. There is a goodnature, a forbearance, and an easy giving of trust

which to an old fashioned Englishman like myself seem to be most dangerous, but which I was assured there form the readiest mode of building up a great commercial community. The great commercial community is there, and I am not prepared to deny that it has been built after that fashion. If a young man there can make friends, and can establish a character for honesty to his friends and for smartness to the outside world, he can borrow almost any amount of money without security, for the purpose of establishing himself in business. The lender, if he feel sure that he will not be

robbed by his protege, is willing to run the risk of unsuccessful speculation.

As we steamed into the Golden Horn the news reached us that about a month previously the leading bank in San Francisco, the bank of California, had "burst up" for some enormous amount of dollars, and that the manager, who was well known as one of the richest men and as perhaps the boldest speculator in the State, had been drowned on the day following. But we also heard that payments would be resumed in a few days; and payments were resumed before I left the city: that no one but the share-

holders would lose a dollar, and that the shareholders were ready to go on with any amount of new capital; and that not a single bankruptcy in the whole community had been caused by this stoppage of the bank which had been extended for a period over a month! How came it to pass, I asked of course, that the collapse of so great a monetary enterprise as the bank of California should pass on without a general panic, at any rate in the city? Then I was assured that all those concerned were goodnatured, that everybody gave time, — that bills were renewed all round, and that in an

hour or two it was understood that no one in San Francisco was to be asked for money just at that crisis. To me all this seemed to be wrong. I have always imagined that severity to bankrupt debtors,— that amount of severity which requires that a bankrupt shall really be a bankrupt,— is the best and indeed the only way of ensuring regularity in commerce and of preventing men from tossing up with other people's money in the confidence that they may win and cannot lose. But such doctrines are altogether out of date in California. The money of depositors was scattered broadcast

through the mining speculations of the district, and no one was a bit the worse for it,—except the unfortunate gentleman who had been, perhaps happily, removed from a community which had trusted him long with implicit confidence, which still believed him to be an honest man, but which would hardly have known how to treat him had he survived. To add to the romance of the story it should be said that though this gentleman was drowned while bathing it seems to be certain that his death was accidental. It is stated that he was struck by apoplexy while in the water.

I was taken to visit the stock-brokers' Board in San Francisco,— that is the room in which mining shares are bought and sold. The trader should understand that in California, and, still more, in the neighboring State of Nevada, gold and silver mining are now very lively. The stock-jobbing created by these mines is carried on in San Francisco and is a business as universally popular as was the buying and selling of railway shares during our railway mania. Everybody is at it. The housemaid of whom I have spoken as earning £70 per annum, buys Consolidated Virginia

or Ophir stock with that money;— or perhaps she prefers Chollar Potosi, or Best and Belcher, or Yellow Jacket, or Buckeye. She probably consults some gentleman of her acquaintance and no doubt in 19 cases out of 20 loses her money. But it is the thing to do, and she enjoys that charm which is the delectation of all gamblers. Of course in such a condition of things there are men who know how the wind is going to blow, who make the wind blow this way and that, who can raise the price of shares by fictitious purchases, and then sell, or depreciate them by fictitious

sales and then buy. The housemaids and others go to the wall, while the knowing men build palaces and seem to be troubled by no seared consciences. In the mean time the brokers drive a roaring trade,—whether they purchase legitimately for others or speculate on their own account.

The Stock Exchange in London is I believe closed to strangers. The Bourse in Paris is open to the world and at a certain hour affords a scene to those who choose to go and look at it of wild noise, unintelligible action, and sometimes apparently of demoniac fury. The unin-

initiated are unable to comprehend that the roaring herd in the pen beneath them are doing business. The Stock Exchange Board in San Francisco is not open to strangers, as it is in Paris, but may be visited with an order, and by the kindness of a friend I was admitted. Paris is more than six times as large as San Francisco; but the fury at San Francisco is even more demoniac than at Paris. I thought that the gentlemen employed were going to hit each other between the eyes, and that the apparent quarrels which I saw already demanded the interference of the police. But the

uproarious throng were always obedient, after slight delays, to the ringing hammer of the Chairman and as each five minutes' period of internecine combat was brought to an end, I found that a vast number of mining shares had been bought and sold. Perhaps a visit to this Chamber, when the Stockbrokers are at work between the hours of eleven and twelve, is of all sights in San Francisco, the one best worth seeing.



*A VISIT TO YO SEMITE
valley from San Francisco requires a
long and very tedious journey. The
tourist first travels by railway from
the city to Merced, about 140 miles,*

the first 100 of which are on the line which runs across the continent. At Merced he sleeps, finding there a very comfortable American hotel at which, however, they will refuse to clean his boots. On the following morning he will start at six by a four horse stage coach, which travelling at an average rate of 5 miles an hour will bring him to the end of his first day's journey at six in the evening. Here he will be well accommodated at a ranche or farm house which has gradually grown to be an Inn, and will be treated with smiling good-natured courtesy. The next day's

coaching will take him into the valley, and on his way he will have passed through a grove of the immense pine trees which first gave celebrity to these regions.

The latter portion of this journey is made through a picturesque country, with fine hills and handsome timbers; but it is not comparable in beauty to very many roads of a similar nature in Europe. The first part of the road,—from Merced through Snelling and as far as Coulterville, — is altogether interesting. I travelled over it in September, when the dust was almost un-

bearable, the river beds were almost dry; the green sward had become yellow, and the mid day heat was extreme. I can easily believe that in May & June it bears a very different aspect. But in May & June the visitors who unfortunately belong to the unprivileged sex can seldom be accommodated with beds. The dormitories in the hotels are devoted to ladies, while the gentlemen repose either under or upon the dinner tables. The crowd is apt to be so great that when the meals are spread enormous energy is required, or at least is often used by those who are anxious to

secure their meals. We had no grass and no water in the streams; but we had every attention shown to us at Mr Black's hotel at which we were the only guests.

Sight seeing in the valley has to be done on horse back, and the horses provided for our use were very good. You would not give me space were I to attempt to convert your columns into a Guide-book for the Yo Semite—I may perhaps best use the few words which are at my command by saying that the chief glory of the place depends on the almost perpendicular steepness and on

the enormous altitude of the rocks which hem it in. The Clouds Nest rises to a height of 6450 feet above the valley, and the rock called Le Capitaine, which to the naked eye seems to hang over if it be not perpendicular is 3000 feet high. The highest summits of the valley are about 12,000 feet above the sea.

The highest mountains of Europe are of course higher than any that there are here, but I know no rocks in Europe or elsewhere which are to be compared to them. Early in the morning, just as the sun is rising, and again for perhaps an hour before it has set, the colours

are beautiful and the effects magnificent. But during the glare of the day everything is painfully white. It is not the whiteness of snow, or of marble, but rather that of plaster of Paris. The substance which produces the effect is in part granite. The shapes of the summits are graceful and bold, but the mountains do not run into sharp peaks and serrated edges. Two of the most conspicuous are called the North and South Domes. The grandeur of the scene,—and it is very grand,—arises chiefly from the manner in which the precipitous sides of the mountains have been

cut sheer down into the valley. In the Spring and early Summer the water-falls must be very beautiful. They were when I was there, though from the scantiness of the mountain streams they were shorn of their great glory.

The return from the valley was exactly the same as the journey to it, hot, tedious, long, and dusty. Both going and coming I measured some of the big trees, finding the girth of the largest which I saw to be 78 feet. From the irregularity of the ground and the knobby excrescencies which add to the size of the trees, accurate measurement is

impossible, but I feel sure that I have rather understated than overstated the amount. The height of the highest trees yet discovered in California is by no means equal to that of some that have been found in Australia. I do not think that any tree exceeding 400 feet in height has been found in America; but a tree has been measured in Victoria which when standing exceeded 500 feet.

The traveller about to proceed from San Francisco to the East may accomplish a part of the journey to Yo Semite on his way. On returning he will stop at Lathrop and pick up the railway

cars for New York, or whatever place may be his destination, thus saving the run of 100 miles back to San Francisco. As to myself, business required me to return to the city, and I thus had the opportunity of making the unbroken journey from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

So many accounts have already been given of this journey that I need hardly detain your readers by describing it at length. It occupies seven days and seven nights, the start from San Francisco being made at 8 AM. During this time the traveller is continually travelling, except for the three spaces of twen-

ty minutes each per diem which are allowed for eating. The undertaking seems to be, if not dangerous on account of fatigue, at any rate liable to great tedium and very much discomfort. I can only say that I never made a journey with less fatigue, less tedium, or less discomfort. I was peculiarly happy in my fellow travellers; but as I have crossed twice and was thus lucky on both occasions, meeting people in the carriages whom I had never seen before and from whom I parted as old friends, I may safely presume that such is the usual condition of things. The traveller

should I think trouble himself with the carriage of no eatables as those supplied on the road are in every way sufficient. If he wishes the solace of wine or spirits he should carry them with him. He will find himself provided with an excellent bed and with ample accommodation for washing his hands and face. The need of a bath at the end of the journey is certainly much felt.



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